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Region 2 News Clips

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Gov. Phil Murphy voices support for full fracking ban, including waste (BURLINGTON COUNTY TIMES; January 30, 2019)

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Cuomo 'health homes' initiative aims to reduce asthma (WNYT NEWS CHANNEL 13; January 30, 2019)

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Pushback to report EPA won't regulate PFOA in water (ALBANY TIMES UNION; January 30, 2019)

The possibility that the Environmental Protection Agency won't set a drinking water limit for PFOA and PFOS has generated push back from environmental advocates and elected officials from New York.

Panel OKs Spending Bill that Boosts Role of Nonprofits in Preservation Projects (NJ SPOTLIGHT; January 30, 2019)

Lawmakers appear to have settled on a mechanism for allocating constitutionally dedicated funds to preserve open space, farmland, and historic structures for the next fiscal year and beyond.

Water district getting upgraded treatment facility (NEWSDAY; January 30, 2019)

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Officials pledge to fix Monmouth County dump stink (ASBURY PARK PRESS; January 29, 2019)

State and county officials pledged to a packed room of mostly weary local residents to fix the foul, pungent odor emanating from the county dump.

National News

Washington Post: The Energy 202: Polar vortex tests gas and electric systems in Midwest, Mid-Atlantic

[New York Times: Scientists Single Out a Suspect in Starfish Carnage: Warming Oceans](#)

Acting Administrator

[E&E: Wheeler responds to dozens of inquiries from senators](#)

[Huff Post: On Carbon Emissions, Trump's EPA Chief Wants To Have It Both Ways](#)

Administration

[E&E: House passes bill to boost salaries 2.6%](#)

[MarketWatch: How the Trump presidency ranks against prior administrations in links to lobbyists in one chart](#)

[Wash Post: The Energy 202: 2020 hopefuls love talking about a 'Green New Deal.' But they're short on specifics](#)

[Wash Post: Report: Trump's 'wrecking ball' on science is posing a threat to public health and the environment](#)

Air

[Bloomberg Environment: Wheeler Won't Reconvene Panels to Review Air Quality Standards](#)

[E&E: Ill. lawmakers alarmed over 'unusual' EPA assessment](#)

[E&E: EPA backs utilities' push to punt on changes](#)

Chemicals

[Bloomberg Environment: Formaldehyde Makers Prepare in Case EPA Reviews the Chemical](#)

[Bloomberg Environment: Hidden Sterigenics Chemical Cancer Assessment Worries Democrats](#)

[Bloomberg Environment: Wheeler Sidesteps Worker Safety Pledge on Deadly Solvent](#)

Coal Ash

[Inside EPA: EPA, Environmentalists Spar Over Path Forward For Ash Rule Revisions](#)

Enforcement

[The Hill: New EPA policy would offer alternative to penalties for some oil, gas polluters](#)

Pesticides

[Bloomberg Environment: EPA Abandons Plans to Roll Back Farmworker Pesticide Protections](#)

Fuels

[Wash Examiner: Ethanol industry prepares for a 'crazy year' trying to sway the Trump administration](#)

Shutdown

[E&E: Dems press Wheeler on shutdown and public health](#)

E&E: What happens if the government shuts down again?

Water

Bloomberg Environment: EPA's Inaction Puts Drinking Water at Risk, Complaint Says

E&E: Questions resurface about industry influence on PFAS study

E&E: Uncertainty over new limit for PFAS sparks outrage

E&E: Enviro-sue EPA over failure to regulate pollutants

Truthout: Factory Farms Pollute the Environment and Poison Drinking Water

Full Articles

Region 2 News

BURLINGTON COUNTY TIMES

South Jersey landfill will not take contaminated soil from Willow Grove base

By Jenny Wagner

January 30, 2019

A South Jersey landfill has changed its mind about accepting soil contaminated with toxic chemicals removed as part of cleanup operations at a former Pennsylvania military base.

In December, the Cumberland County Improvement Authority, which operates the landfill located in Deerfield Township, approved an agreement with Material Solution Services, an environmental consulting and soil management company based in Northampton, Pennsylvania, to accept up to 4,500 tons of the soil from the former Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base Willow Grove in Horsham, Montgomery County.

However, the authority rescinded its approval Tuesday, according to president and CEO Gerard Velazquez III.

"The dirt is not going to be delivered to the landfill," Velazquez said, declining to elaborate on why. "We made a decision at the Improvement Authority that was in the best interest of the authority and the best interest of Cumberland County."

The chemicals, known as PFAS when referred to as a class, were an ingredient in firefighting foams used for decades in training exercises and emergencies at the former Willow Grove base and many other sites across the country. After the chemicals were found in surface and groundwater on and around the former Willow Grove base, the Navy announced plans to remove soil from three areas there, including a former fire training facility.

"There are no established cleanup standards for soil but ... these are areas that we consider to be sources, which could leach into groundwater," William Lin, environmental coordinator for the Navy, told this news organization last summer after a monthly meeting about the cleanup operations.

Some attendees at the meeting expressed concerns about where the soil would be taken, and at the time, the Navy identified a couple of landfills in Berks County, Pennsylvania, that were licensed to accept it.

As of another monthly meeting in December, the Navy had removed about 3,000 cubic yards of soil, and more was planned for January.

As of Tuesday, no soil had been delivered to the Cumberland landfill, and Velazquez said that to his knowledge it is still on the base.

Velazquez added that the authority is disappointed in “misinformation” being reported about the situation, again declining to elaborate.

In a statement about the situation on Tuesday, New Jersey Sierra Club officials said there were many health and environmental concerns about the soil being taken to the landfill, and the authority was doing the right thing.

“Every time we can stop toxic chemicals from being dumped in our state is a win. This material is highly contaminated and can get out into the environment and impact public health. This decision will also force the Department of Defense to properly remediate the material and send it to a more appropriate place. DEP should have never allowed these materials in the first place, this stuff is too contaminated. New Jersey has enough toxic chemicals to deal with,” said Jeff Tittel, director of environmental group.

Tittel noted that the chemicals are unregulated, and he urged the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection to take action to prevent dumping in the future. He added that the chemicals also have been found in drinking and groundwater on and around Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst in Burlington County.

“New Jersey has a serious problem with Joint Base, why would we want more toxic chemicals in our state?” Tittel said.

Officials from the Navy and Material Solution Services did not respond to questions from this news organization on Wednesday.

[BACK TO TOP](#)

BURLINGTON COUNTY TIMES

Gov. Phil Murphy voices support for full fracking ban, including waste

By David Levinsky

January 30, 2019

TRENTON — Gov. Phil Murphy voiced his strong support for a full ban on hydraulic gas drilling in the Delaware River Basin Commission on Wednesday, including the import, treatment and discharge of wastewater from the drilling, commonly called “fracking.”

Murphy announced his position in a letter to the Delaware River Basin Commission, the bi-state agency that oversees water resources across the entire Delaware River watershed in New Jersey, Delaware, New York and Pennsylvania.

The governors in each of the four states are a voting member of the commission, along with a representative from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The commission created a de facto moratorium on fracking in 2010 and extended it indefinitely in November 2011, when it delayed enacting regulations that would have allowed drilling to occur.

Since then, environmentalists have frequently called on the commission and its staff to make the moratorium a permanent ban, arguing that doing so is the only way to ensure the watershed remains unpolluted.

Environmental groups have also opposed regulations put forward in the fall of 2017 to allow the disposal, treatment and storage of fracking waste in the basin, as well as the extraction of water for use in fracking operations outside the basin.

In his letter, Murphy, who is currently the commission's chair, called for the proposed regulations to be amended to ban both fracking, as well as any fracking-related activities from the basin. He said doing so would "provide the fullest protection" to the watershed and the 13.3 million people who rely on its drinking water.

Fracking involves blasting chemical-laced water deep into the ground to harvest natural gas and is widely used to mine Marcellus Shale, an underground rock formation rich in gas deposits that stretches through the Midwest to Pennsylvania.

Environmentalists claim the wastewater created from the procedure is toxic and that the procedure also drains water supplies and can pollute waterways.

New Jersey is not believed to have large natural gas deposits like Pennsylvania, but much of the state relies on the Delaware River for drinking water and the state's close proximity to fracking areas could make it a target to receive billions of gallons of waste.

Murphy first voiced support for a permanent ban on fracking in the basin last year after he was first sworn into office, but his letter to the commission also made clear that he also does not support allowing fracking waste to be stored or treated here or for the basin's water supplies to be used for the procedure outside the basin.

"Fracking poses risks to the Delaware River Basin that New Jersey cannot accept," Murphy said in a statement. "The chemicals present in fracking wastewater are still unknown and we must take caution to protect the recreational, ecological and water resources for the millions of residents and businesses who rely on a clean Delaware River Basin. It is our responsibility to protect public health and safeguard our natural resources for future generations."

Environmental groups applauded Murphy for his action, noting that it was a reversal of the position taken by his predecessor, Republican Chris Christie, who vetoed legislation sent to him in 2011 that sought to permanently ban fracking in New Jersey. He also banned legislation to ban waste from the practice from being stored or treated in the state.

During Christie's tenure environmentalists also feared that the moratorium on drilling could be lifted if Pennsylvania and the Army Corps also voted in favor of ending it.

"It's huge," said Maya van Rossum, of the Delaware Riverkeeper Network. "What the industry wants are spaces and places to get their water and store their wastewater. It's become increasingly costly and increasingly difficult."

She did not know if a vote on Murphy's proposal was imminent, but said his public position would put pressure on the governors of New York, Delaware and Pennsylvania to support it.

"This puts them on notice: you have to make a choice. You either serve the (gas industry) or the people," van Rossum said.

Jeff Tittel, director of the New Jersey Sierra Club, was critical of Murphy for not taking stronger positions on some environmental issues during his first year in office. But he said Murphy's latest action was the right one and demonstrates real leadership on the issue.

"This is a great victory for protecting the Delaware River Basin and the (millions of) people who get drinking water from it," Tittel said Wednesday. "The people of the Delaware River Valley want to be protected from all forms of fracking, including the contaminated waste that comes from it. Governor Murphy is standing up for the Delaware River Basin and protecting our water. It is critical that other states will follow New Jersey's lead."

Assemblyman Herb Conaway, D-7th of Delran, whose legislative district includes several towns whose residents rely on water from the Delaware, described Murphy's action as a "positive precautionary step" to protect the watershed and its residents.

"Fracking waste could pose risks to the Delaware River Basin," said Conaway, who is also a practicing physician. "The chemicals in fracking fluids are not fully known."

ASBURY PARK PRESS

Solar power made more expensive by NJ rules; how can we change that?

By Russ Zimmer

January 30, 2019

Environmental advocates say New Jersey's solar energy price rules, designed to spur solar construction, have long hindered the industry's growth as consumers are being compelled to buy sun-generated electricity at inflated prices.

That might soon change, though exactly how will be tricky.

If you pay an electric bill in New Jersey, you — along with your neighbors and the shop owners on Main Street — are contributing up to \$4.8 billion toward what ratepayers could be charged for solar power over the next 10 years.

A megawatt-hour of solar power produced in New Jersey was sold to utilities for \$203 in December 2018, according to the state Board of Public Utilities. In Pennsylvania, consumers paid \$13 last month, or 15 times less.



"We have to bring these numbers into line," said Stefanie Brand, director of the state Division of the Rate Counsel, a consumer advocate. "We have to find a way to not pay so much for solar or we're not going to succeed in our goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Sometimes you throw around billions and people lose sight of the fact that it does all come out of people's utility bills. We have to be smarter about it."

New Jersey is in the middle of remaking the way we subsidize solar power as the Garden State pushes toward a future with power generation free of the carbon emissions that foul the air and contribute to the existential threat of climate change.



The cost of clean energy

The burning of fossil fuels is propelling the accumulation of carbon in the Earth's atmosphere — along with a litany of other pollutants — which is contributing to the changing climate that we see here in New Jersey, most notably in sea level rise, heat waves and monsoon-like storms.

In response, lawmakers in New Jersey and around the country have sought to incentivize the construction of renewable energy sources, including solar and wind.

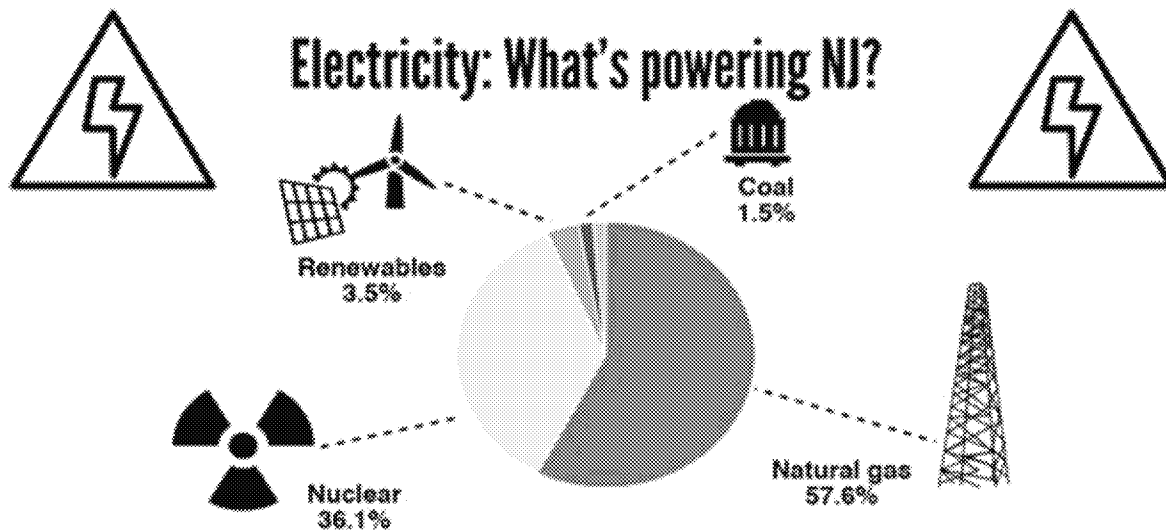
The state's Energy Master Plan calls for all electricity created in the state to be sourced from non-carbon sources by 2050. The same executive order requires New Jersey to be halfway there in 11 years.

Just as with any new natural gas-fired power plant or wind turbine, the cost of any solar investment is ultimately passed on to those who buy power in New Jersey.

The market rules created nearly 20 years ago to price New Jersey's solar power — and entice interested parties into building up solar — were too rigid and aggressive, advocates say.

Developers seized on this and quickly built out capacity, which has been locked into bloated rates that are ultimately paid by consumers. This led to a boom in solar initially, but has more recently stunted development in New Jersey as the pool of available money is being sucked up by existing supply, leaving less for new projects.

The Clean Energy Act, which Gov. Phil Murphy signed in May, kills the current funding mechanism for solar power once it is determined that 5.1 percent of all renewable power produced in the state comes from solar. That figure was at about 3.5 percent in October, according to the latest federal data available.



Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration, October 2018

What comes next for solar

A new method of encouraging solar power is being crafted by state regulators, industry stakeholders and the public, but with certain constraints.

The next solar subsidy must fit under a cost cap, which sets a limit on the total levy passed onto consumers to help solar and certain other renewables, such as onshore wind (but not offshore wind), get a foothold in the energy generation market.

The cap works out to about \$910 million per year for the next three years and then about \$700 million annually until 2028, according to the Clean Energy Act and figures on retail sales of electricity.

The cap for solar alone is \$4.8 billion total through 2028, Brand told the USA TODAY NETWORK New Jersey.

Some of that must be allocated to existing solar projects, whose owners paid for these panels with the expectation that they would be compensated for 10 to 15 years, and the rest of that sum is for new installations, which will be imperative to the state's reaching ambitious clean energy targets.

"The critical issue for the (BPU) going forward is how do they treat these legacy costs while preserving enough money for the continued growth of new renewables?" said Barbara Blumenthal, research director for the New Jersey Conservation Foundation. "There's one pie and they have to decide how to divide it up."

A BPU spokeswoman directed the Network to a staw proposal for the new solar program when asked how to balance the new and the old.

"I look forward to building the strong ties we have with the solar industry, the environmental community, and with the environmental justice community to ensure that New Jersey's solar energy future is sustainable, equitable, and serves the needs of all ratepayers," said the board's president, Joseph Fiordaliso, on the end of the state's solar credit market in a statement released before Thanksgiving.

Solar power in New Jersey

Earlier this month, DSM North America, a vitamin maker, unveiled an expanded solar field near their plant in the tiny Warren County borough of Belvidere. Watch the video at the top to see just how massive this installation is.

Solar Power in New Jersey



2,647

Megawatts installed, 5th in the nation



413,000

Equivalent homes powered by solar



594

Companies in the solar industry



7,105

Jobs in the solar industry, 8th most in 2017



\$8.8 billion

Total solar investment

Source: Solar Energy Industries Association

The 20.2-megawatt array is the largest in New Jersey. The company says that enough power will be produced to meet the facility's needs, with excess juice left over to satisfy the annual electric demand of 400 typical homes. That surplus will be fed into the grid.

But a setup like that is unusual in New Jersey, where there are roughly 105,000 solar installations, according to the latest figures from the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities' Clean Energy program.

A typical system in New Jersey, according to the BPU data, is 7.8 kilowatts, likely a rooftop project that might cost \$20,000 after factoring in a federal tax credit. These systems generally kick small amounts of electricity into the grid during the daytime for which their owners are given a credit on their bills, a process known as net metering.

How much you'll save on your electricity costs depends on whether you buy or lease your solar panels. David P. Willis

Indeed, only 150 installations in the state are classified as commercial projects intended solely to supply the grid.

While New Jersey gets 39 percent of its solar power from utility-scale facilities, California and Arizona, the two biggest solar producing states in the nation, both get more than 62 percent from these larger arrays, according to statistics from the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

Of course, New Jersey is more densely populated — leaving developers less affordable space for thousands of solar panels — and the sun is shining more often in Arizona and southern California, making those areas particularly hospitable to solar generation.

[BACK TO TOP](#)

WNYT NEWS CHANNEL 13 (AP)

Cuomo 'health homes' initiative aims to reduce asthma

January 30, 2019

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) - New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo has a new plan to reduce asthma and asthma-related illnesses.

The Democrat is proposing a pilot program called "Healthy Homes" that would provide help to 500 low-income families living in areas with the highest rates of asthma-related illness.

The families would receive help to reduce environmental factors that can worsen the condition. Assistance could come in the form of asthma-friendly cleaning kits, mattress and pillow covers or help improving a home's energy efficiency, ventilation and heating.

State health officials say reducing rates of asthma complications will result in fewer missed work days and emergency room visits.

To be eligible, families would need to receive Medicaid.

Cuomo included the proposal in his state budget recommendation, which must be approved by lawmakers.

[BACK TO TOP](#)

ALBANY TIMES UNION

Pushback to report EPA won't regulate PFOA in water

By David Lombardo

January 30, 2018

The possibility that the Environmental Protection Agency won't set a drinking water limit for PFOA and PFOS has generated push back from environmental advocates and elected officials from New York.

Politico, citing two anonymous sources, reported this week that President Donald J. Trump's administration won't set limits for the two toxic chemicals that could potentially be contaminating the water sources for millions of Americans, and is are contaminating millions of Americans' tap water. A special panel in New York recently established nation-leading limits fro PFOA and PFOS.

NYPIRG environmental policy director Liz Moran said the lack of action by the EPA means New York must take action, and she called on the state Department of Health to act on the contamination levels recommended by the state Drinking Water Quality Council.

"The first step is to regulate "safe" levels of PFOA and PFOS in drinking water. Other states have already acted: today Vermont and Massachusetts have announced they would begin their regulatory processes to regulate these chemicals," Moran said in a statement.

This sentiment was echoed by NY Water Project, a group formed by residents of Hoosick Falls effected by the PFOA contamination.

"By refusing to set a limit on PFOA and PFOS in drinking water, Trump's EPA has hung human health out to dry," said the group. "They are so deep in the pockets of polluters that they ignored the outcry from our families and others across the nation that have been poisoned by these toxic chemicals."

U.S. Rep. Antonio Delgado, a Democrat who represents the Hoosick Falls, said it would be “unconscionable” for the EPA not to set contamination limits.

“The EPA must take the issue of water contamination seriously, and I will do everything in my power to step up efforts to address this growing crisis,” Delgado said in a statement.

U.S. Rep. Paul Tonko, an Amsterdam Democrat, warned that the EPA could leave millions of Americans exposed to unnecessary risk if they fail to regulate PFOA and PFOS.

“If the Administration truly refuses to act, Congress will need to step in to deliver the safe drinking water standards the American people need and deserve,” Tonko said in a statement.

[BACK TO TOP](#)

NJ SPOTLIGHT

Panel OKs Spending Bill that Boosts Role of Nonprofits in Preservation Projects

By Tom Johnson

January 30, 2019



Lawmakers appear to have settled on a mechanism for allocating constitutionally dedicated funds to preserve open space, farmland, and historic structures for the next fiscal year and beyond.

In a bipartisan vote, the Senate Environment and Energy Committee last week agreed on how to spread at least \$155 million among state and local governments, nonprofit groups and others who typically vie for a piece of corporate business taxes allocated to preservation projects each year.

The legislation (S-2920) largely retains how funds have been apportioned in the past with some notable tweaks, primarily to allow nonprofit groups a larger piece of the funding for open-space acquisition and development, as well as farmland preservation.

Another significant change this year is that the share of corporate business taxes allocated for preservation efforts has been boosted from 4 to 6 percent, increasing the annual funding allocation by about \$60 million.

Still, the overall funding falls short of what had been spent in past years when — relying mostly on borrowing — the state would devote up to \$200 million on open space and farmland projects.

‘Fiscally conservative approach’

Sen. Bob Smith, the chairman of the committee and sponsor of the bill, urged advocates to back the new approach.

“This is a pay-as-you-go, fiscally conservative approach,” said the Democrat from Piscataway.

Sen. Chris (Kip) Bateman, a Republican from Somerset County, agreed. "This is not perfect, but everyone should be happy," he said.

Overall, 62 percent of the funding will be targeted for acquisition and development of lands for public recreation and conservation purposes; 31 percent will go for farmland preservation and 7 percent for historic preservation.

In one other notable change, at least 10 percent of state acquisition funds will be used for the Blue Acres program, an effort geared to buying up flood-prone properties as a buffer against future flooding. Under the new arrangement, Blue Acres is to be folded into the traditional Green Acres program, which funds state and local acquisitions as well as park and recreational projects.

Nonprofit conservation groups, which leverage state open-space and farmland money with their own funds to preserve undeveloped and agricultural land, also saw increases in funds allocated to their efforts. Open-space acquisitions for nonprofits increased from 2 percent to 10 percent and farmland preservation efforts also rose from 3 percent to 4 percent.

"It is so critical that we are able to continue the on-the-ground conservation efforts so many of our partners are doing," said Ed Potosnak, chair of the Keep It Green Coalition and executive director of the New Jersey League of Conservation Voters.

The legislation also authorizes a special \$500,000 appropriation from the Preserve New Jersey Historic Preservation Fund to establish an electronic database to track projects that receive funding for historic preservation efforts.

The legislation now heads to the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee for consideration.

[BACK TO TOP](#)

NEWSDAY

Water district getting upgraded treatment facility

By David M. Schwartz

January 29, 2019



Bethpage Water District is upgrading one of its water treatment plants to allow for greater removal of contaminants. The new water treatment technology also will remove 1,4-dioxane, a man-made chemical the state is expected to regulate this year.

Construction is underway on a \$19.5 million water treatment facility for the Bethpage Water District, as high levels of contaminants continue to spread from the former Northrop Grumman site.

The new treatment plant on Motor Lane, expected to open by late 2020, will allow the district to treat concentrated levels of volatile organic compounds heading toward its drinking water wells and do it more efficiently, District Superintendent Mike Boufis said. It also will include a treatment system for the emerging contaminant 1,4-dioxane, a man-made chemical the state is expected to regulate this year.

"We know there's more significant contamination heading our way," Boufis said this week above a construction pit.

The district expects the U.S. Navy to pick up the \$15 million in costs for the new plant's treatment for volatile organic contaminants, but not necessarily the \$4.5 million for 1,4-dioxane, which is not yet regulated by the federal government, according to the water district and its consultant, H2M architects + engineers of Melville.

The Navy already has given the district \$6.78 million toward the new treatment at Plant 6, where two drinking water supply wells are located. Under a 2012 consent agreement, the Navy is expected pay the full \$15 million, which includes design and planning costs, for treatment for volatile organic compounds — primarily trichloroethylene, known as TCE, according to Rich Humann, president and CEO of H2M.

The water district said it will try to recoup the cost for the 1,4-dioxane removal, but that might be more difficult because it hasn't been regulated by the federal government.

"We can try to pass the cost on to the responsible party. But, either way, the district has never waited. Even through fights behind closed doors with the polluters, we do what's best for the community. We move ahead for the project, and we'll still fight it out," Boufis said.

A Navy spokesman said he could not comment Tuesday.

Airplane and space exploration research, testing and manufacturing at the 600-acre Navy and Northrop Grumman sites began in the 1930s and lasted in some form until the 1990s. Contaminated water was first discovered in the 1940s, and the site was added to the state Superfund list in 1983. Several cleanup efforts are underway to remove contaminated soils and a number of groundwater plumes.

Under the agreements, the Navy and Northrop Grumman are responsible for cleaning up different areas of the plume.

The state Department of Environmental Conservation is working on a study on how to fully contain and treat the plume, which is nearly four miles long and two miles wide in the underground aquifer. Environmental Conservation Chief of Staff Sean Mahar said the DEC recently drilled four wells designed to reduce the most concentrated areas of contamination.

"We continue to call on Northrop Grumman and the U.S. Navy to expedite construction of the full containment and treatment system. If the polluters refuse, we'll do the work ourselves," Mahar said in a statement.

Humann said the plants, by treating the drinking water, also help remove contaminants from the plume, which is slowly spreading south.

The Bethpage Water District "runs wells that have treatment that can withdraw up to 10 million gallons a day. They've been in essence cleaning up the aquifer, just by the very nature of providing drinking water," Humann said. "The upgrades at Plant 6 allow the district to provide clean drinking water, while continuing to restore the aquifer and restore the environment."

Some form of contaminant removal has been in place at the plant since the late 1980s, and two air stripper towers were upgraded a decade ago, Boufis said. A pilot system to remove 1,4-dioxane was added in 2014. It's still awaiting final approval from the state Department of Health, Boufis said.

The water district said the plant would remove existing outdated infrastructure and install two new air stripping units with carbon filtration systems and installation of a new clear well that has five times the capacity of the existing systems.

Last year a state panel recommended a maximum contaminant level for 1,4-dioxane and two other emerging contaminants, citing inaction at the federal level. Ten Nassau County water providers and the Suffolk County Water Authority have sued chemical manufacturers and others over contamination, citing millions of dollars in costs they're facing to treat the water.

The \$6.78 million in federal funding already obtained by Bethpage was announced in December 2017, after Navy Secretary Richard Spencer and Sen. Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) toured the facility in September.

[BACK TO TOP](#)

ASBURY PARK PRESS

Officials pledge to fix Monmouth County dump stink

By Dan Radel

January 29, 2019

State and county officials pledged to a packed room of mostly weary local residents to fix the foul, pungent odor emanating from the county dump.

Monmouth County and state Department of Environmental Protection officials were summoned by Sen. Vin Gopal, D-Monmouth, to a meeting at the Hamilton Fire House in Neptune to address a quality of life issue that has roiled the town for months.

Even on a cold and dreary Monday night, the officials had no trouble attracting a large audience, the odor problems have been so persistent and off-putting.

Complaints spiked in January when people began calling the Monmouth County Health Department, instead of the Monmouth County Reclamation Center hotline number, which resident Tom Loreaux said "never gets answered."



Compacted garbage is trucked to the landfill site at the Monmouth County Reclamation Center in Tinton Falls.

The health department, which received 63 complaints this month, inspected the site and issued five odor violations, county health officer David Henry said.

"The odor is not just outside. I have air fresheners plugged in everywhere. The doors are closed, the windows are closed, it's getting in the house. I stepped outside the other night and it was pungent," said Camille Lo Sapio, who lives in Foxchase, a development directly east of the dump off Shafto Road.

"There's no way I could sell my house because it stinks every day," said Lo Sapio.

Monmouth County Freeholder Director Thomas Arnone said the "problem has escalated to a level that is not acceptable."

The cause of the stink

Geoff Perselay, reclamation center interim superintendent, tied the odors to a major construction project, which he said exposed 11 acres of the sprawling landfill to the air; escaping methane gas; and leachate seeps caused by too much rain.

Residents said the odors follow them all over town.

Perselay said the landfill's gas collection system was turned off during the construction project, for safety reasons. It was turned back on Jan. 11.

Leachate comes with any water that comes in contact with garbage. In 2018, the wettest year on record in New Jersey, 55 million gallons of leachate was removed from the landfill site.

"We've had a difficult time trying to control those seeps because the landfill is so soggy. When it hits the air it creates a hell of an odor," said Perselay.

Another issue was revealed at the meeting: residents were never told of the construction project, which started in September and was completed in January.

"I want to apologize. We haven't communicated, if at all, what we do at the landfill," Perselay told the couple of hundred people gathered. "We didn't notify Tinton Falls or the residents that we're going to dig up 11 acres of landfill."

Solutions

Residents implored officials to shut down the dump, replace the dump with an incinerator or turn the operation over to the private sector, the presumption being that a private operator would manage the landfill better than the government.

Instead, the officials said they would install more wells to collect methane, apply more material to neutralize odors and consider moving landfill operations farther from homes.

The health department has hired a part-time inspector to respond to the complaints.

"We're going to fix this problem and nothing less than that is acceptable," Arnone said.

About the reclamation center

- The reclamation center handles waste disposal for all 53 towns in Monmouth County.
- The center is located on 900 acres, but only 300 acres are active landfill.
- The center handles 400,000 tons of trash a year and 1,300 tons, or 2.6 million pounds, daily.

[BACK TO TOP](#)

The Energy 202: Polar vortex tests gas and electric systems in Midwest, Mid-Atlantic

By Dino Grandoni

January 31, 2019



People walking outside in Chicago despite a temperature around minus-20 degrees. (Photo by Scott Olson/Getty Images)

As millions of residents in the Midwest and Mid-Atlantic hunker down amid historically bitter temperatures, the cold is testing the very energy systems meant to keep their lights on and homes warm during the brutal winter weather.

The polar vortex is poised to deliver a one-two punch to power systems across the eastern half of the United States. Not only are residents demanding more heat and electricity while staying indoors, the icy and windy weather is straining generating stations, power lines and other infrastructure that deliver that power.

Already, thousands of Americans in the Midwest have experienced power outages amid the polar vortex. Dozens in one Minnesota city lost heat in the middle of the night as the mercury plunged to minus-26 degrees Fahrenheit there.

Ahead of the historic lows this week, electric utilities and grid operators began taking precautions to brace for the deep freeze.

Two of the nation's largest regional grid operators, PJM Interconnection and Midcontinent Independent System Operator, put emergency cold-weather procedures into effect this week. Power generators in the PJM regional grid, which stretches from Illinois to New Jersey, were instructed to insulate pipes and top off backup fuel tanks ahead of the cold.

"This is a kind of call to action for any of those last-minute preparations," said Michael Bryson, PJM's vice president of operations.

Just as snowflakes are varied, winter weather can weaken power generation in a number of ways. Cold can shutter coal, natural gas or nuclear power plants. Ice can grid wind turbines to a halt. Snow can incapacitate solar panels.

For homes heated directly by natural gas, frigid temperatures can also strain the supply of heating fuel — as is the case this week in Minnesota.

The Minneapolis-based electric utility Xcel Energy has asked Minnesotans to turn their thermostats down to 63 degrees Fahrenheit through Thursday morning because of a “significant strain on our natural gas system due to extreme weather,” the company said in a statement.

About 150 residents around Princeton, Minn., lost natural gas service about 10:30 p.m. amid subzero temperatures Tuesday night, forcing some to rely on space heaters for warmth. Xcel said it expects to return to service by Thursday. In the meantime, it offered to put those customers up in hotels until heat is restored to their homes.

High winds and other wintry conditions can also disrupt the delivery of electricity, such as by bringing down power lines.

At one point on Wednesday morning, for example, 50,000 homes and businesses served by Commonwealth Edison, the biggest electric utility in Illinois, were without power, mostly in the towns and cities north and south of Chicago. Service was restored to most of those customers by the afternoon.

“When the temperature gets this usually low,” Commonwealth Edison spokesman Paul Elsberg said, “we’re bound to see these types of outages.”

Outages also rolled through parts of Wisconsin and Iowa early that day, affecting about 7,000 customers, according to outage maps of various utility companies. Kenosha County, south of Milwaukee, was hit particularly hard after a power line snapped and sheared power poles in the small town of Somers, Wis., according to the electric and gas utility We Energies.

To keep workers warm, Commonwealth Edison dispatched two or even three crews at a time to allow repair workers to take breaks. We Energies also encouraged its repair staff to pause in warm vehicles.

While the cold is concentrated in the Great Lakes region, policymakers in Washington are feeling the chill. On Wednesday, Energy Secretary Rick Perry huddled to discuss the polar vortex with top aides.

Received an update from [@KarenEvansCESER](#) on how [@ENERGY](#) is ready to respond to the polar vortex hitting the country from the Midwest to the East Coast.

They included Karen Evans, assistant secretary of the newly formed Office of Cybersecurity, Energy Security, and Emergency Response. The Trump administration established that office last year to coordinate its response to power outages from extreme weather events, as well as terrorist attacks. Both Republicans and Democrats in Congress generally applauded the creation of the bureau.

Earlier in President Trump’s administration, however, the Energy Department also pitched a more controversial proposal to keep electricity flowing during cold snaps. The department said such polar vortices are reasons to subsidize coal and nuclear power plants.

Perry said that only those two types of power generation could assure grid reliability because they, unlike gas and renewable energy generators, could keep a 90-day supply of fuel on site. But critics of the plan saw it as a ham-handed effort to prop up Trump’s political allies in the coal business.

The independent Federal Energy Regulatory Commission ended up agreeing with those naysayers. In a binding decision last year, all five of its commissioners, including four appointed by Trump, rejected the Trump administration’s plan.

THERMOMETER

Parts of U.S. continue to face extreme winter conditions

Wintry weather hit parts of Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois and beyond during the polar vortex in January 2019. (The Washington Post)

— **The polar vortex is here:** The bone-deep, relentless cold blasting across the Midwest has been blamed for at least six deaths across the region. Officials urged people to stay indoors, and the governors of Wisconsin and Michigan declared states of emergency and ordered state government offices to close. Some agencies in Illinois were also shuttered Wednesday. "From Minnesota to Michigan, the polar vortex brought with it a slew of school closures, mail service interruptions and airline flight cancellations," The Post's Katie Mettler, Amy B Wang, Angela Fritz and Alex Horton [report](#). "In Rochester, Minn., where temperatures dropped to minus-27 degrees Wednesday morning, all municipal transit services were suspended after buses began experiencing mechanical difficulties."

The coldest temperatures: The Arctic cold is expected to be record-breaking. "Wind chill estimates plummeted to minus-50 in the Dakotas and northern Minnesota on Wednesday. The Arctic air will loosen its grip on the Midwest by Thursday afternoon; temperatures might even approach zero degrees in Chicago and Milwaukee. By the weekend, daytime temperatures will be above freezing across most of the Midwest."

If you live in the Washington region: A nearly 10-degree temperature drop within half an hour Wednesday afternoon prompted the National Weather Service to issue a temporary special "flash freeze" warning, The Post's Dan Stillman and Jason Samenow [report](#). "This day is best viewed from indoors, but if you are out, bundle up," David Streit [adds](#). "Hopefully this is the worst that winter throws at us. Friday's snow chances look anemic. The good news is temperatures recover to normal levels by Saturday and don't slow down, with a run at 60 degrees early next week."

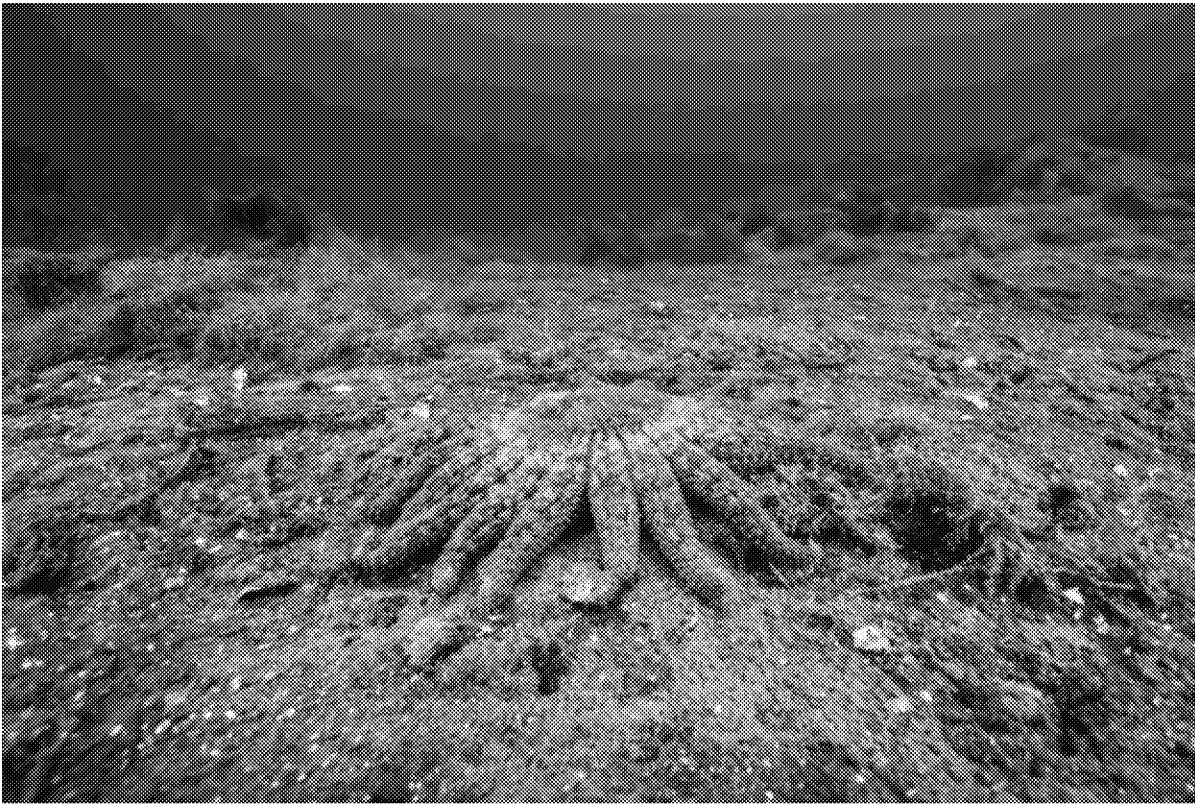
This is what minus-40 feels like: Minnesota-based Post reporter Christopher Ingraham writes in this [great](#) perspective on what minus-40 actually feels like. "Ten below is bitter cold," he writes. "Twenty below is also bitter cold... By about 30 below the cold doesn't feel like cold anymore — it's just pure, unadulterated pain; a sharp, burning sensation. After a few moments, the burning gives way to a deep, dull ache that feels like it's radiating from your bones. I've never been brave and/or dumb enough to test what comes after the ache, but my assumption is it's deeply unpleasant and possibly irreversible."

[BACK TO TOP](#)

NEW YORK TIMES

Scientists Single Out a Suspect in Starfish Carnage: Warming Oceans

January 30, 2019



In 2013, starfish — including the morning sun star, the richly hued ochre star and the sunflower star, whose limbs can span four feet across — started dying by the millions along the Pacific Coast from Mexico to Alaska.

They were succumbing to a wasting disease. It began with white lesions on their limbs, the dissolution of the surrounding flesh, a loss of limbs and finally death. Understanding, let alone solving, the problem would take research.

One day, shortly after the epidemic began, Drew Harvell, a professor of ecology and evolutionary biology at Cornell University who had been sounding the alarm about the disease, received a curious letter.

“I received a \$400 check in the mail from a group of schoolchildren from Arkansas,” Dr. Harvell said. “These kids were so upset about the idea of starfish disappearing from the oceans that they went out and they did this fund-raiser and raised 400 bucks for us to help in our research. I never asked them to do this. They just did it.”

Dr. Harvell matched it with her own money, and a donor kicked in quite a bit more. “That was what funded some of our early surveys,” she said. “These kids, who none of them had been to the Pacific Ocean, but they just needed to know those stars were there.”

One of the ultimate results of the children’s donation, a paper that sheds some light on the decline of the starfish, also known as sea stars, was published Wednesday in the journal *Science Advances*. The main suspect: our warming oceans.

In 2013, parts of the Pacific Ocean became unusually warm as part of a broader marine heat wave, nicknamed the Blob, that would last through 2015 and that was very likely exacerbated by human-caused global warming. But while the ocean warmed, it didn’t warm evenly, making it hard to tell if the heat wave was contributing to the starfish deaths.

In the study, Dr. Harvell and her colleagues used reports from citizen-scientists, and samples from the ocean floor collected by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, to compare changes in the sunflower star population with changes in ocean temperature during the outbreak.

While the disease affected 20 species of starfish, the researchers focused on the sunflower star because it was especially hard hit and because there was good historical data on its population before the epidemic.

The researchers found that the die-off of the sunflower star matched the pattern of heat spreading through the ocean.



Images taken 20 days apart off British Columbia in October 2012, the outset of a starfish wasting disease. Credit Neil McDaniel

According to Rebecca Vega Thurber, an associate professor of environmental microbiology at Oregon State University, who was not involved in the study, “What’s really exciting about this paper is the really strong correspondence between this temperature anomaly that occurred during that year when the sea stars started dying.”

Everywhere the warming went, the sunflower stars sickened and died.

The study showed a correlation between warming temperatures and the spread of the disease, not a direct cause. But it corroborates a hypothesis that was initially questioned because the virus that researchers think is responsible also shows up in healthy sea stars.

“That trigger, in the case of this paper, seems to be temperature,” Dr. Vega Thurber said.

Dr. Vega Thurber pointed out that the presence of a particular pathogen does not necessarily mean a disease will develop.

For example, if you’ve had chickenpox you are carrying the virus that causes shingles. Roughly a third of carriers will develop the disease, but two-thirds won’t. It takes something to prompt its emergence.

Heat has also been implicated as a trigger in the spread of a fungus that is wiping out frog and toad populations around the globe, as well as in coral diseases. In fact, when corals bleach or lose their symbiotic algae because of warming oceans, it’s typically disease that ultimately kills them.

There are things we can do to help marine life, Dr. Harvell said. We can replant seagrass beds and protect mangroves, for instance. But, ultimately, we need to stop climate change, she said. The world’s oceans have absorbed more than 90 percent of the atmospheric heat humans have caused by releasing greenhouse gases.

While some affected sea stars have begun to return to American waters on the West Coast, the sunflower star has not returned off the lower 48 states.

But last summer, on the south coast of Alaska, researchers saw a glimmer of hope: the reappearance of sunflower stars, which had disappeared from Prince William Sound during the outbreak.

“We don’t know where exactly they came from,” said Brenda Konar, a professor of marine biology at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, who was not involved in the Science Advances study. “They were pretty small and we don’t know if they’re going to survive. So we’re really curious about what we’ll see next summer.”

If they make a comeback, the Arkansas students, who are now teenagers, will likely be delighted.

[BACK TO TOP](#)

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